

George Washington Papers, Series 2, Letterbooks 1754-1799

To THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

New York, June 8, 1789.

Sir: Although in the present unsettled state of the Executive Departments, under the government of the Union, I do not conceive it expedient to call upon you for information officially; yet I have supposed that some informal communications from the Office of foreign Affairs might neither be improper or unprofitable. For finding myself at this moment less occupied with the duties of my office than I shall probably be at almost any time hereafter; I am desirous of employing myself in obtaining an acquaintance with the real situation of the several great Departments, at the period of my acceding to the administration of the general Government. For this purpose I wish to receive in writing such a clear account of the Department, at the head of which you have been for some years past, as may be sufficient (without overburdening or confusing the mind which has very many objects to claim its attention at the same instant) to impress me with a full, precise, and distinct *general idea* of the affairs of the United States, so far as they are comprehended

in, or connected with that Department.

As I am now at leisure to inspect such Papers and Documents as may be necessary to be acted upon hereafter, or as may be calculated to give me an insight into the business and duties of that Department I have thought fit to address this notification to your accordingly?
30 I am &c.31

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30. This same letter was sent to the Acting Secretary at War and the Board of Treasury, which, with the Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs, were officers holding over from the Continental Congress. No replies are now found in the *Washington Papers*; but among the undated manuscripts at the end of the year 1789 are memoranda in Washington's writing headed as follows: "Negotiation with Spain" (13 pp.); "From Mr. Swan's Report" (3 pp.), and "Boundary of Sales of Georgia" to various land companies (2 pp.); "Board of Treasury" (5 pp.): all of which seem to have been compiled from the now missing replies, The great departments of the Government under the Constitution were not created until September, 1789, although the Department of Foreign Affairs was created by the Act of Congress of July 27, 1789. Its name was subsequently changed to that of the Department of State and its head thereafter called the Secretary of State by the Act of Sept. 15, 1789.

On June 8 a letter to the same purport as this one to the Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs was sent to the Acting Postmaster General, whose department was temporarily established by the act of Sept. 22, 1789, and permanently fixed by the act of Feb. 20, 1792.

31. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*.

To THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

United States, October 13, 1789.

Sir: The sum of two thousand five Dollars is necessary to be advanced to take up Notes which were given for money advanced for the household of the President of the United States previous to the organization of the Treasury Department.

This sum added to two thousand Dollars which you have already advanced for the purpose of taking up Notes, will compleat the payment of all Monies advanced for the use of the President of the United States previous to your coming into Office. One thousand Dollars will likewise be wanting for the President and a Dft. on Boston for five hundred. In

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my absence Mr. Robt. Lewis will draw from you such money as may be wanting for the use of the House-hold during the journey of the President. I have the honor etc.⁵

5. This letter, signed "Tobias Lear," is entered in the "Letter Book" in the *Washington Papers*.

To THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

United States, December 17, 1789.

Sir: As I am uncertain of the condition and even the Office in which the papers containing accounts of our disbursements for subsistence of British prisoners remain, and as it is not improbable that some negotiations may (whenever our Union under the General Government shall be completed) take place between the United States and Great Britain, in which an accurate undersanding of those Accots. will become necessary, I have therefore thot. proper to suggest the expediency of having some immediate attention paid to them.

Notwithstanding, on as fair a statement of Expenditures as could now be made, much property must undoubtedly be lost by the United States for want of Vouchers and by reason of the negligence with which the business was conducted on our part; yet I was always impressed with an idea, that, under all these disadvantageous Circumstances, a very considerable balance would still be found in our favor. My present wish is, to have the subject so far investigated, as that we might not commit ourselves, by bringing forward Accounts, which had better continue dormant. Shou'd there be no danger of that kind, it would then be desirable to have the business placed in a state, which might enable us to speak from a general knowledge of facts, and in a proper tone; in case a demand of the American posts held by the King of Great Britain should draw pecuniary subjects into discussion. I believe Lists of property carried away by the British, at the time when they

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evacuated the posts they had occupied during the late war, are lodged in the Office of Foreign Affairs. I am etc.⁵⁷

57. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*.

To THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

United States, March 31, 1790.

The Secretary of the Treasury is hereby authorised to negotiate and agree for a Loan to the United States to an amount not exceeding one hundred thousand Dollars, bearing an Interest not exceeding six pr. Cent pr. annum to be applied towards carrying into effect the appropriations made by the Act Entitled, "An Act making appropriations for the support of Government for the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety." And according to the annexed representation.⁵⁷

57. The "representation" was a memorandum from Secretary Hamilton, which is entered in the "Letter Book" in the *Washington Papers* immediately preceding the authorization. This letter, also, is in the "Letter Book." The numerous authorizations of this character, from the President to the Secretary of the Treasury, during Washington's administrations, have, hereafter, been omitted except where the appropriation authorized was of more than routine importance.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

City of New York, August 28, 1790.

Having thought fit to commit to you the charge of borrowing on behalf of the United States a sum or sums not exceeding in the whole Fourteen Millions of Dollars pursuant to the several Acts, the one entitled, "An Act making provision for the debt of the United States", the other entitled, "An Act making provision for the reduction of the Public Debt"

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I do hereby make known to you, that in the execution of the said trust, you are to observe and follow the orders and directions following Vizt. Except where otherwise especially directed by me you shall employ [an agent] in the negotiation of any Loan or Loans which may be made in any foreign Country.

You shall borrow or cause to be borrowed on the best terms which shall be found practicable (and within the limitations prescribed by Law as to time of repayment and rate of interest) such sum or sums as

shall be sufficient to discharge, as well all instalments or parts of the principal of the foreign Debt, which now are due or shall become payable to the end of the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety one, as all interest and arrears of interest, which now are, or shall become due in respect to the said Debt, to the same end of the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety one; And you shall apply or cause to be applied the moneys which shall be so borrowed with all convenient despatch to the payment of the said installments and parts of the principal and interest and arrears of the interest of the said debt. You shall not extend the amount of the loan which you shall make or cause to be made, beyond the sum which shall be necessary for completing such payment, unless it can be done upon terms more advantageous to the United States than those upon which the residue of the said debt shall stand or be. But if the said residue or any part of the same can be paid off by new Loans upon terms of advantage to the United States you shall cause such further loans, as may be requisite to that end, to be made, and the proceeds thereof to be applied accordingly. And for carrying into

effect the objects and purposes aforesaid, I do hereby further empower you to make, or cause to be made with whomsoever it may concern such Contract or Contracts being of a nature relative thereto, as shall be found needful and conducive to the interest of the United States.

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If any negotiation with any prince or State to whom any part of the said Debt may be due, should be requisite, the same shall be carried on thro' the person, who in capacity of Minister, Chargés des Affaires or otherwise, now is, or hereafter shall be charged with transacting the affairs of the United States with such Prince or State, for which purpose I shall direct the secretary of State, with whom you are in this behalf to consult and concert, to cooperate with you.⁹⁰

90. These Instructions are followed in the "Letter Book" by a copy of the commission to Hamilton to negotiate the loan, dated August 28.